

I/WE CLAIM:

1. A method of presenting network object hierarchy information in a network management tool, the network management tool for use in managing a communication network having a hierarchy of network objects, the method comprising the steps of:

displaying status information of a displayed network object on a terminal, the displayed network object having at least one higher-level network object within the hierarchy;

displaying an ordered series of a plurality of buttons on the terminal, each button corresponding to a network object within the hierarchy and being ordered according to a position within the hierarchy of the corresponding network object, the series including at least a displayed network object button corresponding to the displayed network object;

displaying on each button at least a portion of a label indicating the corresponding network object; and

designating a new displayed network object by selecting a network object displayed in the status information or by selecting a button.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the ordered series includes a root button corresponding to a root object of the hierarchy.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein a maximum number of buttons are displayed, and wherein if the number of network objects between the root object and the displayed network object, inclusive, within the hierarchy exceeds the maximum number of buttons, displaying a number of buttons equal to the maximum number of buttons including the root button, the displayed network object button, and buttons corresponding to network objects progressively higher than the displayed network object within the hierarchy.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein the buttons are arranged along a horizontal row above the status information, with the root button at the left and the displayed network object button at the right.

5. The method of claim 1 comprising the further steps of:

monitoring for a position of a cursor on the terminal;

monitoring for the position of the cursor coinciding with a button for which only a portion of a label is displayed; and

while the position of the cursor coincides with a button for which only a portion of a label is displayed, displaying the label in its entirety.

6. A computer-readable medium having instructions for presenting network object hierarchy information as part of a network management tool, the network management tool for use in managing a communication network having a hierarchy of network objects, the computer-readable medium comprising:

instructions for displaying status information of a displayed network object on a terminal, the displayed network object having at least one higher-level network object within the hierarchy;

instructions for displaying an ordered series of a plurality of buttons on the terminal, each button corresponding to a network object within the hierarchy and being ordered according to a position within the hierarchy of the corresponding network object, the series including at least a displayed network object button corresponding to the displayed network object;

instructions for displaying on each button at least a portion of a label indicating the corresponding network object; and

instructions for designating a new displayed network object upon selection of a network object displayed in the status information or upon selection of a button.

7. The computer-readable medium of claim 6 wherein the ordered series includes a root button corresponding to a root object of the hierarchy.

8. The computer-readable medium of claim 7 wherein the instructions for displaying an ordered series of buttons comprise instructions for displaying a maximum number of buttons, and wherein if the number of network objects between the root object and the displayed network object, inclusive, within the hierarchy exceeds the maximum number of buttons, displaying a number of buttons equal to the maximum number of buttons including the root button, the displayed network object button, and buttons corresponding to network objects progressively higher than the displayed network object within the hierarchy.

9. The computer-readable medium of claim 8 wherein the instructions for displaying an ordered series of buttons comprise instructions for displaying the buttons along a horizontal row above the status information, with the root button at the left and the displayed network object button at the right.

10. The computer-readable medium of claim 6 further comprising:

instructions for monitoring for a position of a cursor on the terminal;

instructions for monitoring for the position of the cursor coinciding with a button for which only a portion of a label is displayed; and

instructions for displaying a label in its entirety while the position of the cursor coincides with a button for which only a portion of the label is displayed.